



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

Volume 16
Number 4

Article 1

Summer 7-15-1990

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Recommended Citation

Borhek, Mary V. (1990) "A Grief Observed: Fact Or Fiction?," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 16 : No. 4 , Article 1.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol16/iss4/1>

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Abstract

Disagrees with Walter Hooper's contention that Lewis's marriage was never consummated. Uses excerpts from *A Grief Observed* as well as letters of Lewis, Davidman, and others. Discusses claims that *A Grief Observed* is fictionalized, not autobiographical, but concludes the latter is true.

Additional Keywords

Davidman, Joy—Influence on C.S. Lewis; Lewis, C.S.—Marriage; Lewis, C.S.—Relation to Joy Davidman; Lewis, C.S.—Sexuality; Lewis, C.S. *A Grief Observed*

A Grief Observed: Fact Or Fiction?

Mary V. Borhek

I first read *A Grief Observed* in a copy which still had the name N. W. Clerk on it, although I knew that it was really written by C. S. Lewis, and the library catalog knew it also. At the time it wrung my heart with the magnitude and depth of Lewis' terrible grief. Yet how could I ask his grief to be any the less because that would have meant his love was less. It seemed fitting to me that, having waited most of a lifetime to find his true love, his grief should be wild and inconsolable.

And inconsolable it apparently was, if we can believe his testimony and the testimony of others. In *A Grief Observed* I saw Lewis in his most unguarded moments, questioning, of all things, his faith in God, the core around which he had built his life for some thirty years. Only an experience — one might almost say an earthquake — of tremendous power and devastation could have made the great apologist for the Christian faith question the very foundation of his adult life.

"Lewis never really recovered from the loss of Joy," Chad Walsh has written. "When I next saw him in late 1961, he was subdued and at loose ends."¹ According to Douglas Gresham, Lewis' stepson, "Jack was never again the man he had been before Mother's death. Joy had left him and also, so it seemed, had joy."²

Yet now we learn that one of the great, true love stories of our time may not in reality have been quite so great or so true. Jack and Joy's marriage was not, after all, consummated, according to Walter Hooper, one of the literary executors of C.S. Lewis' estate and editor after Lewis' death of many of Lewis' works.³

The basis for Hooper's statement was set forth in a 1988 letter to John West, a graduate student, and rests upon the testimony of several people. In *C.S. Lewis: A Biography*, published in 1974, Roger Lancelyn Green and his co-author, Walter Hooper, characterized Jack and Joy Lewis' marriage as "an absolute love and a complete marriage."⁴ Now however, Hooper has said that both he and Green knew this statement to be false, but in order to please Lewis' stepsons Green wanted to give the impression that the marriage had been consummated.⁵ It is worth noting that the biography was published eleven years after Lewis' death, when David Gresham was thirty and Douglas was twenty-nine. The sharpness of their grief had by that time been mitigated, one might suppose, and they were certainly of an age to be able to face real facts about their mother and stepfather.

There were others, according to Hooper, who said that

Lewis had not consummated the marriage, namely Major Warren Lewis, Jack's brother, and A.C. Harwood, a friend.⁶ There is also a letter from C.S. Lewis, Hooper has stated, which proves that Lewis and Joy did not complete their marriage physically.⁷

Unfortunately, Green, Major Lewis and Harwood are all now dead, so it is impossible to consult them in person to verify what they are reported to have said. They apparently did not put their information in writing. As to the letter from C.S. Lewis, secrecy shrouds it Lewis' correspondent has not been named, the present owner of the letter is unnamed, and the library where the letter is now under seal has not been designated.⁸ It is always a pity when the proof of a case must rest on the verbal witness of those who are no longer alive, or in the case of the letter, on information to which no one except the second party supplying the information has access.

Fortunately, however, we still have two of the best witnesses there could possibly be that Jack and Joy did indeed consummate their marriage. The truth is there in at least a dozen references in *A Grief Observed*.

How many bubbles of mine she pricked. I soon learned not to talk rot to her unless I did it for the sheer pleasure. . . . of being exposed and laughed at. I was never less silly than as H.'s lover.⁹ (In the book "N.W. Clerk" referred to his wife as "H." Joy's first name was Helen.)

Or this:

One thing, however, marriage has done for me. I can never again believe that religion is manufactured out of our unconscious, starved desires and is a substitute for sex. For those years H. and I feasted on love; every mode of it. . . . No cranny of heart or body remained unsatisfied. (pp. 6,7)

A few pages further on he writes that at first, after her death, he was afraid to go to places where he and H. had been happy, but soon he found that his missing her was not connected to any particular locale.

Her absence is like the sky, spread over everything. But no, that is not quite accurate. There is one place where her absence comes locally home to me, and it is a place I can't avoid. I mean my own body. It had such a different importance while it was the body of H.'s lover. Now it's like an empty house. (pp. 11,12)

On the next pages we read this:

How long, how tranquilly, how nourishingly, we talked together that last night! And yet, not quite together. There's a limit to the "one flesh." You can't really share someone else's weakness, or fear or pain. (p. 13)

At another place, Lewis writes:

I know that the thing I want is exactly the thing I can never get. The old life, the jokes, the drinks, the arguments, the love-making. . . . (P. 39)

And what do we make of the following:

One flesh. Or, if you prefer, one ship. The starboard engine has gone. . . . (p. 39)

Or this:

What sort of lover am I to think so much about my affliction and so much less about hers? (p. 47)

Consider this:

What was H. not to me? She was my daughter and my mother, my pupil and my teacher, my subject and my sovereign; and always, holding all these in solution, my trusty comrade, friend, shipmate, fellow-soldier. My mistress. . . . (pp. 55,56)

A paragraph later Lewis writes:

Solomon calls his bride Sister. Could a woman be a complete wife unless, for a moment in one particular mood, a man felt almost inclined to call her Brother? "It was too perfect to last," so I am tempted to say of our marriage. (p. 56, 57)

And another paragraph after that, Lewis says,

There is, hidden or flaunted, a sword between the sexes till an entire marriage reconciles them (p. 57)

Toward the end of that paragraph, Lewis speaks of marriage as

this carnival of sexuality. . . . And then one or the other dies. If, as I can't help suspecting, the dead also feel the pains of separation. . . . then for both lovers, and for all pairs of lovers without exception, bereavement is a universal and integral part of our experience of love. (pp. 58, 59)

Unequivocally, he affirms:

We were one flesh. Now that it has been cut in two, we don't want to pretend that it is whole and complete. (p. 64)

Joy also seems to give the lie to statements that the marriage was never consummated, and that therefore the book must be a fictionalized account. Chad Walsh and his wife received letters in which

She bubbled over with happiness. . . and celebrated Lewis' prowess as a lover. (pp. 141, 142)

She wrote to her brother Howard Davidman (who passed this information on to Lyle Dorsett) that Jack was a "wonderful lover," and added that she was glad she has not had a mastectomy "because he very much enjoyed caressing her breasts."¹⁰ George Sayer says of Lewis: "He asked his doctor if it were possible for a man of his age and state of health to have sexual intercourse. The doctor gave Lewis the go-ahead, 'if you are careful and sensible.'"¹¹

Gresham contributes these bits to the controversy:

Nineteen-fifty-seven was the year of Mother's renaissance and the quiet miracle of her return to health and

the visible, almost tangible growth of a huge love between her and Jack. It grew from the more conventional love of a man for a woman and a woman for a man, until it became something indescribable in human terms, a great and holy glorification of God's gift to mankind.¹²

Earlier, he speaks of Jack and Joy retiring at the close of the day

together to Mother's bed. Often. . . I would go to them to take them a cup of tea, or to ask if there was anything they required. I soon learnt to knock first, and wait for the call of "Come in, Doug" before I opened the door.¹³

The strongest evidence for the consummation of the Lewises' marriage come from a letter [20 December 1961] Jack wrote to Dom Bede Griffiths, a former pupil of Jack's who was now a Benedictine monk in India:

To lose one's wife after a very short married life may, I suspect, be less miserable than after a long one. You see, I had not grown accustomed to happiness. It was all a "treat, I was like a child at a party. But prolonged earthly happiness, even of the most innocent sort, is I suspect, addictive. The whole being gets geared to it. The withdrawal must be more like lacking bread than lacking cake.

One thing is perhaps recording. I prayed that when I buried my wife my whole sexual nature should be buried with her, and it seems to have happened. Thus one recurrent trial has vanished from my life — an enormous liberty. Of course this may only be old age — we must not, as Bunyan says, "mistake the decays of nature for the advance of grace." But the liberty is a fact. It is wonderful to be able to think unrestrainedly and gratefully of the act of love without the least reawakening of conscience.¹⁴

One wonders why there are those who want to believe that Jack and Joy's marriage was never consummated. It is because Joy was a divorced woman, and they do not want to acknowledge what seems to them to be Lewis' sinfulness in marrying a divorced woman? There is a whiff of idolatry in a desire to see an admired figure as incapable of being a real human person after all. Are they concerned for Lewis' immortal soul? One would suppose he could be trusted to have made his peace with such matters. Or is it a misplaced aversion to the body and a desire to glorify only the spiritual aspects of this apparently very human love?

Walter Hooper says that Lewis once told him that he (Lewis) had "always been a bachelor at heart." This follows a quotation from a letter of Lewis' to Arthur Greeves. In this letter Lewis spoke of Coventry Patmore's poem, *The Angel in the House*, in which Patmore set forth a

theory of marriage as a mystical image of, and approach to, God: He is extremely down on people who take the ascetic view. . . . The whole poem has raised a lot of difficulties in my mind. Even if it were true that marriage is what he says, what help does this give as regards the sexual problem for the innumerable people who can't marry? Surely for them asceticism remains the only path?¹⁵

Hooper continues:

This raises the question as to why Lewis included himself — which he did — among those who cannot marry.¹⁶

He goes on to theorize that the fact that Mrs. Janie King Moore, the mother of a comrade in arms with Lewis in World War I, lived with and supported by Lewis, was perhaps the reason why Lewis did not marry.¹⁷ Without getting into this rather odd arrangement — it lasted some thirty years in all, and was characterized by Warren Lewis as an infatuation and by their father as an affair¹⁸ — in the quotation as given in the Green-Hooper book, I do not see that Lewis necessarily included himself in speaking of those who “cannot marry.” He could have been thinking of many categories of people who “could not marry” for a variety of reasons. It should be noted that this chapter, which includes both the statement about being a bachelor at heart and the quotation from the letter to Greeves, was written by Hooper.¹⁹ The fact that Lewis told Hooper he had always been a bachelor at heart²⁰ need not indicate that Jack and Joy’s marriage was never consummated. Undoubtedly Lewis, who had lived fifty-seven years without being married, had come to think of himself as a bachelor, and no doubt had been understandably surprised to find himself after so many years a married man. It was quite probably an eventuality he had never envisioned.

When Joy appeared on the scene, however, there were two people who very plainly saw that such an eventuality was not at all impossible.

It was a year or so later that my wife and I visited in England and had a chance to observe Joy and Lewis together [Chad Walsh wrote]. She seemed to be at The Kilns a good deal. My wife firmly declared, “I smell marriage in the air.” Whether Lewis smelled it is more doubtful. (pp. 139, 140)

In his diary, Warren Lewis recorded the following:

In the summer of 1955 [Joy] hired a house in Headington, No. 10, Old High St., and she and J [Jack] began to see each other every day. It was now obvious what was going to happen, and sometime this year there was a secret marriage at the local registry office. . . . I assured me that Joy would continue to occupy her own house as “Mrs. Gresham,” and that the marriage was a pure formality designed to give Joy the right to go on disabusing him. Joy, whose intentions were obvious from the outset, soon began to press for her rights, pointing out with perfect truth that her reputation was suffering from J’s being in her house every day, often stopping until eleven at night.²⁰

Joy, it would seem, knew what she wanted, and was able to bring it to pass. Eventually, the civil marriage which had taken place was blessed by an Anglican priest as Joy lay on what she and everyone else supposed was her death bed. It was not. Instead, she recovered miraculously and enjoyed about two years of comparatively good health. During that time we are asked to believe that this woman who had succeeded in inserting herself into Lewis’ most intimate life was content to participate in a platonic marriage.

If the marriage was indeed platonic, then in her letters Joy was trying to fool others into thinking that theirs was a marriage including sexual intercourse. It is not necessary, of course, for intercourse to follow caressing of breasts, but

the information certainly points in that direction. It is also possible that Joy could refer to Jack’s prowess as a lover and not mean that the ultimate step of intercourse had been taken. Are we to suppose that she wanted to fool her correspondents? Was she so eager to present herself as a woman married in every way, including sexually, even if this were not true?

As further proof that the marriage remained unconsummated, Hooper has stated that in the summer of 1963 Lewis showed him four notebooks in which he pretended to have written *A Grief Observed* in 1960. The notebooks were completely blank. Lewis had written his book somewhere else, which, Hooper believes, proves that the book is really fiction.²¹ Again, it is disappointing that the one who could corroborate this statement, Lewis himself, is long dead. Even should the blank notebooks surface, as so many of Lewis’ things seem to have done, a blank notebook is nothing but a blank notebook. It is difficult to argue much from blank pages.

In the event that these notebooks were labeled in what would seem to be Lewis’ handwriting, it is known that Hooper can duplicate Lewis’ writing quite accurately.²² One should also remember the recent scams such as Clifford Irving’s “authorized” biography of Howard Hughes, Mark Hofmann’s forgeries of American historical items, which were “authenticated” by experts, and the “authenticated” Hitler diaries of 1984, in which huge sums of money had already changed hands before the deception was discovered. Handwriting authenticated by handwriting experts can be shaky evidence indeed.

Let us suppose for a moment, however, that *A Grief Observed* really is a fictionalized account of Lewis’ bereavement. This supposition does not reflect well upon Lewis. It would mean that at the time of his first and deepest bereavement he was pretending to a deeper grief than he actually felt. He was also writing a piece of wishful thinking, pretending to the loss of a sexual dimension he had never enjoyed. Why? Was he making up for a desperately desired consummation of the marriage which had not occurred, either because he was physically unable or because of his scruples about being married to a divorced woman?

In his lifetime he never stated that the book was a fictionalized account. (One hopes that a letter will not now surface in which he is supposed to have stated that *Grief* was indeed fiction. After a time when a continuing number of things “surface” posthumously, one begins to feel uneasy about such “proofs.”)

Or, let us suppose that *A Grief Observed* is really what it seems to be, a book written with an almost brutal honesty in its portrayal of Lewis’ thoughts about his marriage and God after Joy’s death. In this book he expressed, in unequivocal, poignant fashion, the crashing down of his structures of faith:

Meanwhile, where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing Him, so happy that you are tempted to feel His claims upon you as an interruption,

if you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be — or so it feels — welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. (p. 4)

He continued with this theme:

Not that I am (I think) in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe such dreadful things about Him. The Conclusion I dread is not, "So there's no God after all," but "So this is what God is really like. Deceive yourself no longer." (p.5)

If these were his real feelings, why would he not camouflage them and write instead of his great faith in the face of his great loss? Publication of the book could certainly not have helped Lewis in his role as deeply committed Christian. Certainly he could not have published it in order to encourage people in their faith or in their bereavement. The book is too real, too unvarnished for that.

The fact that Lewis at the time published the book under an assumed name might seem to argue for fictionalization. Chad Walsh, however, attributes the pseudonym to delicacy. (p. 149) Might Lewis also have chosen to publish the book in this way because it was too painful at that time to stand before the world emotionally and psychically naked, metaphorically speaking, devoid of any covering which would protect the bones and nerves of his inner agony? George Sayer offers a broader interpretation of this supposition:

The book is so intimate and personal that it had to be published pseudonymously or anonymously if at all. He would have found unbearable the correspondence that would have followed publication under his own name.²³

The question must be asked: If he did not publish the book to enable the bereaved to find comfort in their faith, why did he publish it at all? He must have known that sooner or later the name of its true author would come out. He also must have known that it would not enhance his reputation as a defender of the Christian faith. In fact, under whatever name it was published, he must have known it would not cause its readers to increase their faith in God.

What drove him to publish the book, no matter under what name he published it? He is not the first author, nor will he be the last, who has needed to stand before the world in all the agony of his (or her) innermost pain and emblazon it, as it were, across the heavens: "This is the truth, in all its pain and ambiguity." It is as if they need their desperate cries to be heard. "Listen! Listen!" they cry to a heedless world. "My pain and sorrow are so great you must listen to me! Do not pass me by in my anguish." In less fevered moments, these writers must also know that it is their real words, written in unflinching and uncompromising honesty, which will reach into the hearts of others who are suffering similar agonies and help them as all the near-platitudinous statements will not.

Lewis:

I tried to put some of these thoughts to C. this afternoon.

He reminded me that the same thing seems to have happened to Christ: "Why hast thou forsaken me?" I know. Does that make it easier to understand? (p. 5)

And again:

And poor C. quotes to me, "Do not mourn like those that have no hope." It astonishes me, the way we are invited to apply to ourselves words so obviously addressed to our betters. What St. Paul says can comfort only those who love God better than the dead, and the dead better than themselves. (p. 29)

Thus far I have dealt mainly with *A Grief Observed* as true because the proof seems to be there that the Lewises' marriage was consummated. In a *Mythlore* article published four years ago, George Musacchio presents a different case for *A Grief Observed*'s being a fictionalized account of Lewis' experience. Musacchio's reasons rest on arguments quite other than the physical consummation of the marriage—which he does not doubt.

When I first read *A Grief Observed* I could not believe that the rational, insightful Christian writer whose other works I'd come to know — I could not believe that C. S. Lewis had been so shattered by his wife's death; I could not believe that he had plunged so near to despair. Of course it was emotionally overwhelming; of course the pain and loss were like losing one's arm or leg (pp. 61, 67, 70); but the musings about God as "Cosmic Sadist" go beyond these feelings (e.g., p. 35). This grieving husband did not seem like C. S. Lewis. Surely it was partly a pose.²⁴

Musacchio goes on to list and develop four reasons why he believes that the book is a fictionalized account of Lewis' reaction to Joy's death.

First, the book's elegiac elements suggest that it is conscious art and not autobiographical journal. Second, Lewis' way of dealing with the first rejection of [his poem] *Dymor* suggests that he may have created a mourner in extremis as a way of working through his own grief. Third, psychological studies suggest that this mature, stable Christian would not have been as shattered as the speaker of *A Grief Observed*. And fourth, Lewis' letters of the time do not suggest such extreme grief but on the contrary show a sad acceptance of the expected death. Joy's death hurt her husband deeply, but it did not shatter his view of God; it did not make his world collapse around him; it did not vitiate his literary talent. He worked through his grief by stepping outside it a bit, observing it, and writing a work of conscious art that would serve others.²⁵

Musacchio notes that Peter Schakel also believes that *A Grief Observed* is a fictional diary, published in the hope that deep, personal feelings could be presented in a way that would be helpful to others.²⁶

Although Musacchio's four points are quite different from the point I have been making, I believe that there are valid arguments against Musacchio's position. It should be noted that some of the information I present was unavailable to Musacchio and Schakel at the times of their writing.

The fact that Musacchio sees in *A Grief Observed* the

elegiac elements found in Tennyson's *In Memoriam* to my mind proves only that Lewis was entirely cognizant of the poem and that he recognized how truly Tennyson had caught the realities of grief. Tennyson accurately mirrored the processes by which millions of people have dealt with their grief. As Lewis went through his process, Tennyson's words could have occurred to him again and again, with Lewis saying mentally, "That's it! That's it!"²⁷

There could be another reason why Musacchio would prefer to fit *A Grief Observed* into a literary framework. Listening to a great exponent of Christian faith speak of God as possibly being a "Cosmic Sadist"²⁸ can be utterly unnerving. Plumbing the depth of anguished grief with Lewis shows us how flimsy our faith structures may prove themselves to be in the day when the whirlwind passes over us and our loved one is caught away. If this be so for Lewis, we say, how then shall we stand in that day? In our fear we distance ourselves from his extreme pain by relegating it to a "fictionalized" status.

Musacchio's second point is that Lewis' way of dealing with his pain on having his poem *Dymore* rejected may point to his way of dealing with his grief over Joy's death. Of course, writers tend to write out their grief. Painters tend to paint their grief. Because I have done exactly what Lewis apparently did — journaled my pain — it does not seem at all strange to me that Lewis may indeed have found old exercise books around the house and begun scribbling his pain in those books. I see here no argument for fictionalization in such a circumstance. In fact, for me it argues reality. The fact that Lewis later wrote *Letters to Malcolm* in the form of a correspondence with an imaginary man named Malcolm need not mean that the journal form of *A Grief Observed* indicates fictionalization. The problem with this analogy is that while the letter form and Malcolm may have been imaginary, the content certainly is not. With *A Grief Observed*, the premise is that the content itself is partly imaginary. These are therefore two very different matters.

Musacchio's fourth point (we will deal with the third in a minute), that Lewis' letters of the time do not suggest the extreme grief of *A Grief Observed*, does not necessarily bolster an argument for fictionalization. In a letter to Sheldon Vanauken, written two months after Joy's death, Lewis wrote:

My great recent discovery is that when I mourn Joy least I feel nearest to her. Passionate sorrow cuts us off from the dead (there are ballads & folk-tales wh. hint this).²⁹

"Passionate sorrow," Lewis calls it, writing to one who had also suffered passionate sorrow on the death of his wife.

Some other letters written during that period do not indicate such a depth of grief. There could be many reasons for this. One may not wish to stand before the recipient of the letter in the utter nakedness of bitter grief. As one sits down to write, one clutches a concealing persona about one. At such a remove, it becomes possible to temper the expression of grief, to hide the anguish, the bitterness, the feelings of hopelessness. Is there any reason to upend a

bucket of pain, so to speak, upon the defenseless head of one's correspondent? Courtesy demands that one should not use the other as a dumping ground — to put it crudely.

For his third point Musacchio presents the argument that psychological studies do not bear out such extreme grief in those who know that their loved one suffers from a prolonged terminal illness. Much of the grief work is done while the person is still alive.

There are two reasons why this generalization might not apply in Lewis' case. The first is that despite his chronological age, in relation to his marriage he was a young lover losing his wife after a little more than three years (from the date of his sacramental marriage rather than the date of the civil marriage). No matter what his relationship with Mrs. Moore might have been, he had finally found his true mental, spiritual, emotional — and I would add, sexual — complement at a time in life when all hope of this happening would have seemed to be gone. In this circumstance, I do not believe that extravagant grief would be unnatural.

The second reason I believe *A Grief Observed* is a true expression of Lewis' feelings is that *he is grieving not one but two very similar losses*. A. N. Wilson points out that upon the death of Mrs. Moore

it was not long before, like a Pavlovian dog trained to lacerate his heart with the same emotional experiences, he married a woman whose circumstances were exactly parallel to those of his own mother in 1908 — a woman dying of cancer who had two small sons.³⁰

When his mother died, the nine-year-old Lewis bottled up his grief within himself. Grief repressed into the unconscious does not fade away. On the contrary, it bides its time and can reappear many years later, strengthened by its long underground sojourn, when the opportunity presents itself through an approximate duplication of circumstances. Might not the thoughts about Cosmic Sadist be an echo (couched in more mature words) of Lewis' childhood response to his mother's death?

The conclusion I dread [he wrote] is not, "So there's no God after all," but, "So this is what God's really like." (p. 5)

Might not the child Lewis have entertained the half-formulated thought, "So this is what God's really like"—although he would not have expressed it half so clearly at the time? What of this sentence:

The remembered voice—that can turn me at any moment to a whimpering child. (p. 17)

The tricks of the mind are almost infinite, and often the words we choose provide unconscious clues to our inmost thoughts and feelings.

The fact that Lewis apparently nearly lost his faith during this time certainly does not mean it was gone for the rest of his life. Toward the end of the book we find his faith beginning to reassert itself:

The mystical union on the one hand. The resurrection of the body, on the other. I can't reach the ghost of an image,

a formula, or even a feeling, that combines them. But the reality, we are given to understand, does. Reality the iconoclast once more. Heaven will solve our problems, but not, I think, by showing us subtle reconciliations between all our apparently contradictory notions. The notions will all be knocked from under our feet. We shall see that there never was any problem. (p. 83)

Nor could a man who had lost his faith have written *Letters to Malcolm*. It was, however, a finely tempered faith:

We all try to accept with some sort of submission our afflictions when they actually arrive. But the prayer in Gethsemane shows that the preceding anxiety is equally God's will and equally part of our human destiny. The perfect Man experienced it.... And to God, God's last words are "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

You see how characteristic, how representative, it all is. The human situation writ large. These are among the things it means to be a man. Every rope breaks when you seize it. Every door is slammed shut as you reach it. To be like the fox at the end of the run; the earths all staked.³¹

Douglas Gresham, who was there in the days after Joy's death, has written:

A Grief Observed is true and therefore it is valuable to all who read it. It cost Jack great pain and yet rewarded him with deeper understanding. I find it hard, even to this day, to read, for I was there when he wrote it and I was a part of his agony and he a part of mine.³²

Lewis himself, in *Letters to Malcolm*, indicated that Joy's death for him was "terrible":

And if, which God forbid, your suspense ended as terribly as mine did....³³

Without real proof to the contrary, the only reasons I can see for believing the book to be a fictionalized account are a desire to distance oneself from the extreme discomfort of confronting naked agony and an unwillingness to grant a revered spiritual leader and teacher permission to be a real, fallible, intensely human being.

When all is said or written, however, we must return to the fact that it is impossible to know whether *A Grief Observed* is totally true, or a fictionalized account of Lewis' grief. I myself believe that Lewis, in the integrity of his heart, chose to allow the exposure of his true feelings. To my mind, there is a nobility in this opening of his heart to the world at his time of greatest anguish. A true recounting of actual feelings reaches across space and time to other anguished hearts in a way that literary works do not, although they too may be off help in working through one's grief.

Others may and obviously do feel differently. In light of the information we possess at present, it is impossible to state definitively that one view or the other is what really happened. Any further "proof" which might surface at this point should, I believe, be greeted with the greatest skepticism. Some mysteries must remain mysteries until we no longer see through a glass darkly.

With regard to speculation about whether or not Jack and Joy's marriage was consummated, there is something

unseemly about trying to pry into their deepest and most intimate affairs when they can no longer respond. Such prying does two fearlessly honest people a great disservice. At best the reasons the second-guessers give for believing the marriage not to have been consummated are murky. Perhaps we would all do well to take the advice of the sage Lao Tse:

*To know that you do not know is the best.
To pretend to know when you do not is a disease.*



Endnotes

1. Chad Walsh, *Afterword in A Grief Observed* by C. S. Lewis (Bantam Books, 1980 edition), pp. 147-148.
2. Douglas H. Gresham, *Lenten Lands* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988) p. 130.
3. Walter Hooper, *Through Joy and Beyond* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1982), p. 151. See also "Green's Pretence Exposed as Hooper Confesses Deception," *The Lewis Legacy*, Lindentree Press, Orange, CA, June 1989.
4. Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper, C. S. Lewis: *A Biography* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), p. 277.
5. West letter and "Green's Pretence Exposed."
6. *Ibid.*
7. West letter and "Long-lost Secret Letter Surfaces to Prove Lewis Celibacy," *The Lewis Legacy*, June 1989.
8. "Long-lost Secret Letter."
9. *A Grief Observed*, p. 3. Hereafter quotations from this work will be identified by page number in the text.
10. George Sayer, Jack: C. S. Lewis and His Times (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 227.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Lenten Lands*, p. 112.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 89. See also Kathryn Lindskoog, *The C. S. Lewis Hoax* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1988), p. 65: "...one of the steps claims that he accidentally witnessed the fact once by walking in on them." Lindskoog cites the source of this information on p. 69, footnote 18: "Douglas Gresham, 'C. S. Lewis: Memories of a Compassionate Man,' The Ninth Annual Wade Lecture, delivered at Wheaton College on 4 November 1983. Available as cassette tape 8406 0107."
14. *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, edited by W. H. Lewis (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966), p. 301. The second paragraph of this letter is not included in the book. Lindskoog paraphrases this paragraph on pp. 93-94 of *Hoax*.
15. C. S. Lewis: *A Biography*, pp. 106, 107.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Hoax*, p. 86. See also A. N. Wilson, C. S. Lewis (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), p. xvi.
19. *Hoax*, p. 143.
20. *Brothers and Friends: The Diaries of Major Warren Hamilton Lewis*, edited by Clyde S. Kilby and Marjorie Lamp Mead (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1982), p. 245.
21. "Hooper Reveals That Famous 'Grief Observed' Notebooks Were Blank," *The Lewis Legacy*, June 1989.
22. Not everyone, however, finds Hooper's and Lewis' handwriting identical. See *Mythlore* 60, Winter 1989, letter from Steven Wissler, p. 60.
23. *Jack*, p. 241.
24. George Musacchio, "C. S. Lewis' *A Grief Observed* as Fiction," *Mythlore* 45, Spring 1986, p. 25.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

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"a clucking and screaming as if it was the hoarse voice of some monstrous bird" and Tash himself appears in person.

The first skirmish of the Last Battle has now begun, and the Calormenes steadily drive the friends of Narnia toward the Stable door, calling out "Tash! Tash! The great god Tash! Inexorable Tash!" At the Battles' height, Tirian flings the Tarkaan into the Stable:

A terrible figure was coming towards them.... It had a vulture's head and four arms.

Thou has called me into Narnia, Rishda Tarkaan. Here I am.... What has thou to say? (LB, p. 124)

This at last is no wraith, but the Lord of Death himself, who pounces upon the Tarkaan like the bird of prey he is. Now, a voice is heard: "Begone, Monster, and take your lawful prey to your own place: in the name of Aslan," and with that, "The hideous creature vanished with the Tarkaan still under his arm." (Ibid.) It is the voice of the High King Peter. Servants of Aslan are able to drive out demons in His Name.

This is the last ever seen of Tash in Narnia. Tirian is now inside the Stable and meets the seven friends of Narnia in their eternal form, and they report that Tash has Already made away with Shift the Ape. Now Aslan appears, and Tirian flings himself at the Lion's feet to receive the "well done" (LB, p. 138) of the good and faithful servant.

Aslan has come to bring about the end of Narnia, and to take from it into his own Land all who will. When all is at an end, there is found "a young Calormene sitting under a chestnut tree beside a cold stream of water. It was Emeth." (LB, p. 151) When he entered the Stable so boldly, the Calormene had met not Tash but Aslan, who greeted him with these sweetest of words: "Child, all the service thou has done to Tash, I account as service done to me." (LB, p. 156) This is so,

Not because he and I are one, but because we are opposites. For I and he are of such different kinds that no service which is vile can be done to me, and none which is not vile can be done to him.

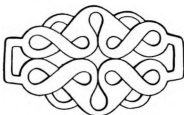
Perhaps Lewis never wrote more important words. They are also the very last words in *The Last Battle* about Tash. At the conclusion of this passage, As Aslan says, "all find what they truly seek," the story of Tash is at an end. He has no place in Aslan's Country. And there, we, who know more that Lewis at the time he wrote *The Last Battle*, must leave the god of the Calormenes, whether he represents death, or Satan, or the local divinity of an archaic kingdom, or any of the false gods worshipped in our world. Not all mysteries are capable of resolution this side of the Stable door.

Endnotes

1. C.S. Lewis, *The Horse and His Boy* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), p. 76. (Hereinafter cited as *HHB*.)
2. Donald Taylor, "Theological thoughts about evil," in David Parkin, *The Anthropology of Evil* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 34.
3. C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), p. 25 (Hereinafter cited as *LB*.)

Endnotes to *A Grief Observed*, (continued from page 9)

27. Perhaps this seems to me to be a natural supposition because many times in the years since I first read Lewis' *Till We Have Faces*, as I have lived my own life, I have seen the reflection of many of Orual's experiences in my life, and I too have said, "That's it!" I have also marveled that Lewis could so accurately depict the psychological processes of a woman, and realized that an idea he had had many years previously did not come to fruition until after he had known Joy.
28. *Grief*, pp. 43-49 in particular. Lewis used the phrase at other places in the book as well.
29. Sheldon Vanuaken, *A Severe Mercy*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1977), p. 231.
30. Wilson, C. S. Lewis, pp. xi-xii. Not only did Lewis lose his mother in 1908, but his grandfather and uncle as well, piling grief on grief. See Kathryn Lindscoog, C. S. Lewis: *Mere Christian* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1987), p. 75.
31. C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964), pp. 42-43.
32. *Leinen Lands*, p. 131.
33. *Letters to Malcolm*, p. 41.



Endnotes to *Hosts, Armies....* (continued from page 16)

16. Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Book of Lost Tales Vol. II* edited by Christopher Tolkien, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1984, p. 213, note; *Lays of Beleriand*, p. 281, line 3517. One wonders as to what Tolkien meant to do with the thousands of Balrogs in these earlier tales. This author suggests that they would have become the Trolls.
17. Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Silmarillion*, p. 191.
18. Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Shaping Of Middle-earth* edited by Christopher Tolkien, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1986, p. 302.
19. Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Silmarillion*, p. 193; see also *The Encyclopedia Of Military History*, p. 101, for a good rule of thumb when estimating battle casualties in drawn fights or routs; *Lost Tales Vol. I*, p. 241, states that "nearly half of all the Gnomes and Men who fought there were slain," as the final casualty toll.
20. Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Lord of the Rings, Return of the King*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966, p. 167.
21. Tolkien, J.R.R., *Unfinished Tales* edited by Christopher Tolkien, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980, p. 239.
22. Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Lord of the Rings, Appendix A*, p. 320.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 355.
24. Tolkien, J.R.R., *Unfinished Tales*, p. 352.
25. Fonstad, K.W., *The Atlas Of Middle-earth*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1981, p. 151.
26. Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Lord Of The Rings, The Two Towers*, p. 171.
27. Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Hobbit*, p. 303.

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- J.R.R. Tolkien: *The Hobbit, The Lord Of The Rings*.
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 Karen Wynn Fonstad: *The Atlas Of Middle-earth*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1981, p. 151.
 Lisa Anne Mende: "...And Yet Not So Many Nor So Fair...Diminution and Substitution in *The Silmarillion and The Lord Of The Rings*".
 Tom Loback: "Kindreds, Houses and Population of the Elves during the First Age," "Hoth, Hothri, Hothron," *Halls Of The Elven-king*.
 Dupuy and Dupuy: *The Encyclopedia Of Military History*.